

**FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA  
MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** December 4, 2002

**TO:** Anthony S. Griffin  
County Executive

**FROM:** Kevin H. Bell, Chairman  
Human Services Council

**SUBJECT:** **Recommendations Regarding Development of the FY 2004 Advertised Budget Plan**

The Human Services Council greatly appreciates the opportunity to comment on the development of the 2004 budget so early in the process. You will find our recommendations in the attachment.

**The Budget Atmosphere**

Fairfax County faces several considerable difficulties in trying to develop its 2004 budget.

- The local economy is sluggish.
- The Commonwealth is not providing sufficient support for local services, and it's likely that even the current level of support will deteriorate further.
- The demand for local services, especially human services, continues to grow as our community becomes larger, more diverse, and suffers through the difficulties of a weak economy.

Many of the fiscal constraints affecting Fairfax County are beyond our control, but we can control our response to these constraints. The community will need to make many difficult choices. Your FY 2004 recommended budget will reflect many of those painful decisions.

Yet, this difficult budget process also serves as an opportunity. It reinvigorates the continuing efforts by the County and its employees to foster continuous improvement and initiative. The Human Services Council is working closely with Deputy County Executive Verdia Haywood and the Human Services Leadership Team to develop new and dynamic solutions to our current financial dilemma. These actions represent what we think are the best possibilities for mitigating the impact to the thousands of Fairfax County most vulnerable residents who rely upon human services from the County.

**Reviewing the Budget through the Lens of the Human Services Community Challenges**

The Council reviewed 79 potential program/budget reductions and alternatives proposed by Human Services Directors as part of the FY 2004 budget development. Such a large amount of information required us to develop a framework for our process--a framework that structured the information in a manner that facilitated understanding and decision making. We decided to consider the information through the lens of the Community Challenges.

The Human Services Council and the Human Services Leadership Team developed the Community Challenges to provide a framework of guiding principles for looking at the broader mission of human services. The Challenges present an alternative to viewing human services using the traditional agency-by-agency method. They allow us to look across multiple agencies and identify services that have related objectives. This larger perspective -- which shows how different services work together to address needs in the community -- also helped us assess potential impact to the overall continuum of care that results from reductions in individual programs and services.

The seven Community Challenges are:

1. Providing Assistance to Promote Independence
2. Ensuring the Availability of Safe, Affordable Housing
3. Supporting Families and Individuals in Crisis, and Preventing Abuse and Neglect
4. Responding to Threats to the Public Health
5. Addressing Alcohol, Drug, Mental, and Physical Health Issues
6. Responding to Crime in the Community
7. Providing Community-Wide and Targeted Supports to Prevent Social Isolation and Neighborhood Deterioration

The Council held several meetings and two budget workshops attended by Human Services agency directors, many program staff, representatives of human services boards, authorities, and commissions, as well as the community. Written comments submitted by boards, authorities, and commissions were incorporated into the Council's deliberations. We are grateful for the assistance provided by the directors and their staff. Initiatives are already being implemented in response to State funding reductions that affect the current fiscal year. The Council also acknowledges a number of redesign initiatives and alternative service delivery approaches that are in process or are in the conceptual phase. We never cease to be impressed by the dedication, responsiveness, knowledge, and insightfulness of the Human Services staff.

### **Categorizing and Ranking Budget Reductions**

We used a four-level ranking scale for the 79 potential program/budget reductions and alternatives that we considered. The scale considered: the size of the reduction in community services; the seriousness of the change for specific populations; whether there were efforts underway, or soon to be underway, to mitigate the impact; and whether there were alternative services available. The scale consisted of the following, in order from difficult reductions – that is, those where the threat to health and safety is serious but not excessive -- to unacceptable reductions -- that is, those the Council opposes.

1. **Difficult Reductions.** These potential reductions will not excessively jeopardize health, safety, or the overall continuum of services, but will still have a significant and serious service impact.
2. **Serious Reductions.** The Council would consider these reductions severe because of unacceptable service system impacts, but redesign work is underway that will mitigate the impact. The Council reserves judgment on these reductions pending development of the mitigation strategies.
3. **Severe Reductions.** These extremely serious reductions potentially have unacceptable service system impacts, but for which the staff are exploring: a) alternative service delivery approaches; or b) alternative or expanded revenue sources. Here, too, the Human Services Council reserves judgment on these reductions pending development of the alternatives.
4. **Unacceptable Reductions.** These reductions are unacceptable to the Council. They will lead to unsafe conditions, unhealthy outcomes, and an impoverished continuum of care for County residents. They reflect a level of care that Fairfax County should not tolerate. The Council opposes these reductions, and we recommend that you take these items off the table.

### **The Human Services Council's Commitment to the Budget Process**

Let us be very clear; the Human Services Council recognizes that every one of these reductions will create difficulties. Though all these items will result in deterioration of needed services, we made a concerted effort in our recommendations to preserve basic service levels and the overall continuum of services. This is an ongoing process, and the Council will continue to work with Mr. Haywood and the Human Services Leadership Team to pursue mitigation strategies and potential service delivery alternatives. The Human Services Council will be an active participant in this process throughout the months to come.

Fairfax County's human services system and community have many strengths. We anticipate that this solid foundation will enable us to provide a limited continuum of services to the portion of our residents who are the most vulnerable during this difficult period. The Council is committed to ensuring human services for individuals who have few or no service alternatives. However, the Council is concerned that a significant number of these reductions will reduce preventative services, therefore leading to more costly alternatives in the future.

We are available to discuss our recommendations and approach with you at your convenience. We hope that our work will aid you in your difficult decisions. Thank you.

cc: Verdia L. Haywood, Deputy County Executive  
Edward L. Long, Jr., Chief Financial Officer  
Susan Datta, Director, Department of Management and Budget  
Human Services Leadership Team  
Human Services Council  
Human Services Boards, Authorities, and Commissions